Six meetings of the MIDCOM have taken place so far. The last meeting was held in New Delhi in December 2007. The meetings, *inter-alia,* focussed on issues such as training, high level visits, exchange of instructors, sharing of experience relating to disaster management and relief operations, sharing of maritime information and defence industry cooperation. These issues are constantly pursued in accordance with the MoU signed between the two Governments.

DRDO leadership in making country self-reliant

3137. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has called Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) to lead the country's self-reliance in technology development;

(b) if so, whether the country's self-reliance in technological development combined with industrial and economic progress makes Inida a true super-power in the South Asian Region;

(c) if so, what are the man proposals the DRDO is considering to have a planned and time-bound application and delivery, in fields such as hypersonic propulsion, unmanned land and underway water vehicles, etc.; and

(d) to. what extent DRDO has agreed to work for them?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) A achieving self-reliance in technology development is a responsibility that has to be met through national effort by the all the Government agencies including DRDO and Private Industries.

(b) Having established country's self-reliance in key technologies and strategic systems, India is already a power to be reckoned with, in South Asian Region.

(c) and (d) DRDO is undertaking or has already undertaken project in the technology areas of hypersonic propulsion, unmanned land and under water vehicles.

Acquisition of Trenton landing Platform Dock

3138. SHRIMATISUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General has indicated the Navy for acquiring for Trenton Landing Platform Dock from the United States' Navy without a rigorous technical evaluation of the actual physical state of the ship and on-board equipment;

(b) if so, what are the other main points mentioned in the CAG report;

(c) whether Government has conducted any inquiry as to how such purchases have been made by the Forces; and

(d) if so, what action has been taken against those held responsible?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (C&AG) has mainly observed in its report that the decision to purchase the Landing Platform Dock (LPD) from the USA was concluded without a proper physical assessment of the ship. The Indian Navy acquired Indian Naval Ship (INS) Jalashwa (ex-USS Trenton) after a Joint Visual Inspection of the ship undertaken by an Indian Navy delegation, led by the then Vice Chief of Naval Staff, the delegation also sailed on the ship.

Further, log books and records of major equipment as well as last hull inspection records were also examined by the delegation. The Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA) was signed by the Indian side on 31 st July 2006 for the acquisition of the Landing Platform Dock from the USA at a total cost of US Dollar 48.23 million. The total cost included the cost of the ship, cost of 04 Landing Craft Mechanized (LCMs), spares, documentation, crew training, cost of the ship refit, etc. During the execution of the refit work package, it was considered necessary by Indian Navy to increase the scope of work. The refit work package was, therefore, completed with increased scope of work. On the whole, the total cost of the project increased by US Dollar 2.4 million. The Indian Navy assessed her residual life to be above 10 years. After completion of refit, theo ship arrived in India in September 2007. The ship can be used for amphibious operations as well as disaster relief. The decision to purchase the ship was considered to be in the best intrests of national security.

Relaxation in FDI cap in Defence

3139. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to relax the Foreign Direct Investment cap of 26 per cent in defence sector to facilitate co-development of multi-role transport aircraft by Hindustan Aeronautics; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when this cap is likely to be relaxed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH: (a) Yes, Sir. There is a proposal to relax Foreign Direct Investment cap of 26 per cent to facilitate co-development of multi-role Transport Aircraft.

(b) The matter is under process to get approval of the competent authority.

Utilisation of benefits of sagar Nidhi

3140. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRI VIJAY J.DARDA:

Will the Minister of EARTH SCIENCES be pleased to state:

(a) how the information relating to under water technology of submersibles like remotely operated vehicles, deep sealed mining system, robotic and manned submersible gathered by acquiring Rs. 230 crore Sagar Nidhi, will be harnessed for mitigating the suffering of earthquakes, floods and Tsunami disaster and welfare of common man; and

(b) whether matching capabilities developed for the purpose have percolated to the actual beneficiaries?

THE MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) Technology Demonstration Vessel Sagar Nidhi is a platform for demonstration of underwater technologies such as remotely operated vehicles, manned submersibles, deep seabed mining system etc. These technologies can be used for exploring deep seas for harnessing seabed resources like polymetallic nodules. The information relating to the above underwater technologies are not relevant to the earthquakes, floods or Tsunamis.